



FIND YOUR POWERFUL IDEA

CHRIS ANDERSON ON PUBLIC SPEAKING



30 MINUTES

Find Your Powerful Idea



“Anyone who has an idea worth sharing is capable of giving a powerful talk. The only thing that truly matters in public speaking is not confidence, stage presence, or smooth talking. It’s having something worth saying.”

*-Chris Anderson,
TED Talks: The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking*

Maybe you’ve watched TED Talks and always wished that you could deliver one yourself. But you’ve kept wondering—“What would I talk about? What could I possibly have to say?” Actually, you probably have many powerful ideas that deserve to be shared with the world. As Chris says: “Many of the best talks are simply based on a personal story and a simple lesson to be drawn from it.”

Over the next few pages, we’ll walk you through an exercise to come up with an idea. Then, we’ll let you pick the idea you want to develop into a talk and leave you with some key things to focus on as you conduct your early research. If you already have an idea for what you want to speak about, this exercise is optional. However, we’ve found they can be a helpful springboard for creativity and can even help you think about old experiences in new ways.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD IDEA FOR A TALK?




TAKE EVIDENCE OR OBSERVATIONS AND DRAW A LARGER CONCLUSION






Credit: TEDx Speaker Guide

Find Your Powerful Idea

Use this worksheet to brainstorm a variety of ideas that could become the basis for your next talk. Don't censor yourself yet. Just let the ideas flow and then see if anything stands out. You can print out this worksheet and jot down notes in each box, or you can create a brainstorm on a wall using a whiteboard or post-it notes. Put 30 minutes on the clock and come up with as many ideas as you can!

<p>Recent Work <i>Think back to your work over the last 3-4 years. What really stands out?</i></p> 	
<p>Excitement <i>What was the last thing you were really excited by?</i></p> 	
<p>Anger <i>What was the last thing you were really angered by?</i></p> 	

Find Your Powerful Idea

<p>Pride <i>What were the last 2-3 things you've done that you're most proud of?</i></p> 	
<p>“That’s really interesting...” <i>When was the last time you were in conversation with someone who said “That’s really interesting...”</i></p> 	
<p>Magic Wand <i>If you could wave a magic wand, what is the one idea you'd most love to spread to other people's minds?</i></p> 	

Narrow In On One Powerful Idea



There is no singular formula for the perfect talk. Some of the most successful talks in TED's history have been about topics as wide-ranging as introversion, bamboo, and holding your breath for 17 minutes. Some speakers tackle ideas that are very narrow or personal, while others tackle subjects that are universal and broad. So how do you identify a *good* idea? Here is a checklist for some factors you can consider when honing in on a subject for your talk.

Some Characteristics of Good Ideas for Talks

- Is this an idea I'm passionate about?
- Does it inspire curiosity?
- Will it make a difference to the audience to have this knowledge?
- Can I truly explain the idea in the time slot allocated, complete with necessary examples?
- Do I have the credibility to take on this idea?
- Can I articulate how this topic is connected to other ideas that most people will know or care about?
- Can I explain the essence of the idea in a way that novices can understand?
- Can I explain why this idea matters?

Remember, your idea doesn't have to satisfy all of the above criteria, but it helps if you address at least 1 or 2. With that in mind, look back over your list of ideas and try to pick one. Then summarize what it is and why it matters below.

My Idea

My idea in 1-2 sentences:

Why my idea matters:

Research Your Powerful Idea



After you select one idea to focus on, you should start to research it as you prepare your talk. How can you do this?

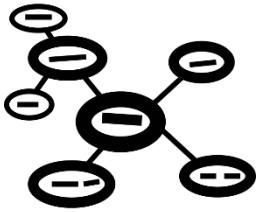
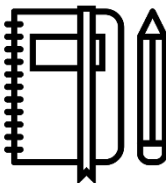

- + Speak with experts about the idea.
- + Speak with people who are very new to this idea. What do they know? What do they find confusing? What metaphors or explanations make sense to them?
- + Read what else has been written on this topic.
- + Compile your own personal experiences related to this idea.

As you research, pay particular attention to the following things because they might help you structure your talk later:

- + What issues related to your idea matter most?
- + How are these issues related?
- + What concepts related to your idea might be most confusing or difficult to explain? What metaphors or images do people use to explain them?
- + What remains mysterious about your idea? What is still a riddle?
- + What are the key controversies surrounding your idea?
- + What would a novice know about your idea?

Record Your Research

Your might find it helpful to record your research in the following ways:

<p>Concept Map Create an image showing how the ideas and concepts you find are connected to each other.</p> 	<p>Record Your Own Journey Write freely about your own learning journey. How did you encounter this idea for the first time? How did your understanding evolve?</p> 	<p>Sort into Subtopics Break out some index cards or colored markers. Record the subtopics related to your idea on cards and then sort them or color code.</p> 
--	--	---